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Fall 9-1-2005

# RELS 370.01: Mysticism - Meister Eckhart and Medieval Women Mystics

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## Meister Eckhart and Medieval Women Mystics

Paul A. Dietrich  
Office: LA 101A  
Phone: 243-2805  
Hours: MWF 9-10  
& by appointment

RELS 370  
Autumn, 2005  
TTh 9:40-1100  
LA 203  
3 credits

An introduction to several major European mystics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Topics to be considered include: methodological issues in the study of mysticism; the languages and genres of medieval mystical literature, esp. vision accounts, sermons, treatises, and autobiography; attitudes toward the body and desire, eroticism and asceticism, power and authority, pain and suffering; the epistemological status of visionary and ecstatic experience; the role of tradition, innovation, and community in the formation of medieval women and men; the politics of dissent, persecution and heresy; traditions of spiritual friendship between women and men; Passion mysticism and affective spirituality; apophaticism, intellection and the *via negativa*; the role of music, liturgy and ritual.

### Required Texts

Eckhart, Meister, The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises (CWS, Paulist)  
McGinn, Bernard, The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart (Herder and Herder)  
Mechthild of Magdeburg, The Flowing Light of the Godhead (CWS, Paulist)  
Porete, Marguerite, The Mirror of Simple Souls (CWS, Paulist)  
Suso, Henry, The Exemplar (CWS, Paulist)

### Course Syllabus

Aug.30	Introduction – the discourse of mysticism: forms, structures, contexts
Sept.1	Medieval theologies and visionary traditions – the role of gender
6,8	Intellection and desire: the Rhineland Dominicans and the beguines
13	Humanities faculty retreat – no class
15	Meister Eckhart as <i>Lesemeister</i> and <i>Lebemeister</i>
20,22	Mysticism of the ground, eternal birth, breakthrough and living w/o a why in Eckhart's German sermons and treatises
27,29	The defense, trial & condemnation – the politics of heresy I
Oct. 4,6	<i>Frauenmystik</i> and visionary recitals: the beguines and Mechthild of Magdeburg
11	Courtly ethos and the hunt for love in <u>The Flowing Light of the Godhead</u>
October 13	Midterm exam
18,20	Formed in the heart of God – metaphors of flowing and sinking in Mechthild
25,27,	Apophasis, annihilation, spiritual poverty and living w/o a why in Marguerite
Nov. 1,3	Porete's <u>Mirror of Simple Souls</u>
8	Gender and dissent – the politics of heresy II
10	Breakthrough and the nature of true freedom: the rehabilitation of Eckhart in

15,17,	Henry Suso's <u>The Little Book of Truth</u>
22,29	Re-membling the Passion: affective spirituality and Passion mysticism in <u>The Little Book of Eternal Wisdom</u>
Dec.1,6,8	Ascesis, detachment and autohagiography in <u>The Life of the Servant</u>
Dec. 15	Presentations, conclusion and review
	Final Exam (10:10-12:10)

### **Course Requirements**

1. Timely completion of assigned reading.
2. Attendance/participation in class discussions; optional class presentation.
3. Midterm exam and final exam.
4. (Optional) research paper on approved topic in lieu of final exam.

No extensions on written assignments. Evidence of plagiarism will result in failure of the course. Five or more unexcused absences will also result in failure of the course.

September 19 Last day to add/drop on Cyberbear

October 11 Last day to drop by drop-slip